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TWO SERMONS

A. B. EARLE D.D.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

TWO SERMONS.

BY

REV. A. B. EARLE, D. D.

AUTHOR OF "THE MORNING HOUR," "BRINGING IN SHEAVES," "THE REST OF FAITH," ETC.

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He that winneth souls is wise.—*Ps. 11 : 30.*

And they went forth and preached everywhere.—*Mark 16 : 20.*

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BY JAMES H. EARLE.

TO THE READER.

I AM now seventy-two years of age; have preached fifty-three years; held union meetings with twenty-two denominations; preached twenty thousand six hundred and sixty-five times, and hope to preach ten years longer.

In compliance with the wish of many friends, I have selected two familiar sermons, the one preached as my twenty-thousandth sermon; the other at eleven o'clock, watch-night, Dec. 31, 1883, and send them, as far as I am able, to all who have labored with me in *Revival Work*, and to others who may read them as my *Friendly Greeting*. May the Holy Spirit accompany them!

A. B. EARLE.

Newton, Mass., June, 1884.

TWO SERMONS.

THE CHURCH PREFERRED.

"If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."
Ps. 137 : 6.

NO one could persuade himself that these pious Jews referred simply to having a home in the city of Jerusalem. There must have been some other attraction that rendered the city so dear to them. The very name suggested to them the Divine presence. In Ezekiel 48 : 35, God has given the city a name full of tender memories: "The name of the city from that day

shall be, The Lord is there." This was the attraction, no doubt.

No place so dear to them, as the place where God's honor dwelt. No place where God had so often revealed Himself and shown them His glory, as in that city

I propose to place the word Church in this text where Jerusalem stands, and read it, "I prefer the Church of God above my chief joy."

Not any one denomination, but the people of God, using the word in the same sense that the martyr Stephen did in Acts 7:38, "This is He that was in the Church in the wilderness."

This allusion was not to a denomi-

nation, but to the people and cause of God in the wilderness.

Using the word in this broad sense, I purpose to state a few reasons why we should prefer and love the Church more than we love anything else in this world. More than we love parents or children, husband or wife, property or pleasure, or even life itself, next to our Redeemer

Has Done More.

The Church has done more, and is now doing more, for this world, than all other organizations united. The Church is the strong basis on which all permanent reforms must rest for support. It is the light of the wolrd,

he salt of the earth, the great wheel in the basement.

Forty or fifty years ago, a temperance society was formed, that ignored the Bible and prayer in their meetings. Their motto was, "Away with the Bible, away with prayer from our meetings. We are going to reform the world." But did they reform the world? The organization was a mere rocket, that exploded and went out in sparks, for the want of a basis to rest upon. So it has been, and so it will be, till time ends. All reforms that do not rest on the Bible and Christianity as a basis, must come to naught.

Paul wrote to Timothy that he

might "know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Pillars are used to sustain heavy burdens. When Samson removed the two main pillars upon which that immense flat roof rested, the whole building fell, causing the death of a great number of Philistines. So the Church is God's great burden-bearer.

Missionary Societies.

Every missionary society seeking the salvation of men, has had its origin in the Church. These societies have usually originated in small prayer-meetings, or with a few Christians

while looking over the wants of the world. God says of the Church, "All my springs are in thee." Like our great rivers which can be traced to some small spring.

Who has not admired the beautiful Susquehanna River near its outlet? There it is, deep, broad, and majestic, with large vessels on its bosom. But as we trace its crooked course among the Pennsylvania hills, winding our way through the State of New York, until we reach the village of Cooperstown, — near that village is a little cluster of springs. There is the origin of this great river. So the Bible and missionary societies through the Church of Christ started from small beginnings.

One of these organizations, now sending its saving power to the ends of the earth, preaching Christ to millions of lost men, had its origin with thirteen members, starting with thirteen dollars in the treasury.

I found, in Oregon and Nevada, great shafts extending from this parent society. To these were attached cogs, and pulleys, and wheels, all moved by the organization at home; like an immense factory with its looms and spindles, employing thousands of laborers, with one great wheel in the basement moving them all.

The Church is that great wheel in the basement, which under the mighty

Spirit is moving the moral machinery of the world.

Every Minister.

The Church has furnished every one of Christ's ministers now on the walls of Zion, or in the great missionary field, "bringing in the sheaves." Withdraw the entire ministry of God from their great work, and a mighty arm of reform is taken away. The Church has translated, and is translating, the Bible into all languages, and is giving it to all nations. What should we do without the Bible? And what would the earth be without it?

Financially.

The Church has done more, financially, for this world than everything else. Some people complain that it costs so much to build meeting-houses, and support ministers. But look at it for a moment. Suppose a decree should come forth from God, that not a minister, or Christian, or house of worship, should ever be found within fifty miles of this place. How much would property be worth here? Who would wish to live here? We should see what I saw in Charleston, S. C., soon after the late war. Inside the windows of those beautiful homes, worth from $5000 to $50,000 each, this

notice, "To Let," "To Let." So it would be here, and everywhere else, without Christianity and the Bible. Much as it costs to build meeting-houses and support ministers, we have more than every dollar we have paid out, in the enhanced value of our property.

Jacob's father-in-law got hold of this great truth in his day. After Jacob had served 14 years for his two wives, he said to his father, he must go to his kindred. But his father made it an object for him to remain another year; and changing his wages again and again, kept him, in all, twenty years, then gave as a reason for keeping him so long, that "God had

dealt well with him" on Jacob's account.

How true to the life this has been and is still, to the ends of the earth! Some of these husbands, when you decided to marry, selected a pious, godly young lady to share your joys and sorrows. You showed good judgment in the selection if she was willing to be united for life with an unconverted man. But after a while she said gently, "Husband, it is lonely on communion-days to have you absent; and besides, our children are growing up, and ought to hear their father's voice in prayer." But you finally said, "My wife, if we are going to live pleasantly together, you must

not talk to me so much about religion. Have your religion, but don't talk to me about it." You silenced her. Yet when you went to the office, or store, or bank, she was in her closet, saying, "O God, take care of my husband; protect and keep him in his business." Her prayer was the lightning-rod that drew off the red cloud of wrath that hung over your head. Little do you know how much you owe to those prayers. Won't you say to her to-day, "I will never speak unkindly to you again about religion"?

God spares a family, a town, a country, because He has redeemed ones in it. He would spare Sodom

and Gomorrah if ten righteous men could be found in them. So that the Church, faulty as it is, has done more, and is now doing more, for this world than all other organizations put together, and for this reason should be preferred and cherished.

"Lord, Thy Church is still Thy dwelling,
Still is precious in Thy sight;
Judah's temple far excelling,
Beaming with the gospel's light."

The Mother of All.

The Church is the mother of all redeemed souls. "Jerusalem which is from above, is free, which is the mother of us all." Not a part of Christ's children, but of them all.

Far distant be the day when I speak ill of my mother. I think I should love and venerate my mother, if there were rum-blotches on her face. What if she has faults? She is my mother, with all her faults. She gave me birth, and nursed and cared for me, when I was weak and helpless. Now, when I am grown to be a man, shall I forget or neglect her? How soon a man sinks himself in the esteem of his neighbors, who goes about speaking ill of his mother, or neglects her!

The Church is my spiritual mother. I was born into the kingdom of Christ through her pains and soul-travail. She baptized and nursed me

when I was too weak to render her much help. If I have done the Church but little good, she has done me a world of good. Let no redeemed one speak ill of his spiritual mother, although she has so many faults.

Christ's Bride.

The Church is Christ's bride. He has betrothed her to Himself forever. He says even to the backsliding Christian, "Return, ye backsliding daughter, for I am married unto thee." I am amazed at His choice. It is more surprising to me, than it would have been if Prince Albert had passed by the queen, and all the royal families, and proposed marriage to a girl in a

country poorhouse, paying her bills, clothing and educating her, then uniting with her in marriage. Would not every one have been surprised at his choice? Look at Christ's choice for a bride. Passing by the higher order of beings (the fallen angels), that sinned before we did, and fixing His eternal love on this poorhouse world, He found His bride owing ten thousand talents, and with nothing to pay. He took her in her rags and pollution, paid her debts, clothed, and educated her.

How wonderful this choice! But it is His choice. The love between Christ and His bride is a reciprocal love. He loved her and died for her,

and she loved Him well enough to die for Him. She has done it, and will do it again if necessary.

There is a sense in which every soul is married to Christ at conversion, and yet, in a grander sense, the marriage ceremony is yet to come off. His betrothed bride is now singing, as she waits for that day:—

"O, what wonder! How amazing!
Jesus, glorious King of Kings,
Deigns to call me His beloved;
Let me rest beneath His wings."

I understand the Divine order to be this: When Christ's bride is ready, so that she can say, "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus!" then Christ will descend to a point overhead, with

the virgin angels, and all those who will have reached Heaven before with Him. The saints then living on the earth will undergo a change equivalent to death, and be caught up to meet those who had gone before, with the Heavenly Bridegroom among them. Then, by the light of the world on fire, the grand marriage ceremony will take place. The angels have a set piece to sing, only suitable to sing on that occasion. I do not know the tune,—I shall know that when I hear it,—but the words I know now. They are these:—"Let us rejoice and be glad, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." At that

time all the redeemed will receive their resurrected bodies. None before, none afterward. This change will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the trumpet shall sound. No doubt Abraham, with all the saints in Heaven, are looking forward to that day with great interest. Then, for a little time, the palace chamber, Heaven, will be vacated. For aught we know, all the saints and angels then in Heaven will go forth with the Bridegroom to celebrate His marriage. Then I think Christ will take His bride to His Father's, — to her palace chamber, her many-mansioned home, where the Father will give Him a grand reception, with His

bride, in all her beauty, leaning on His arm.

Then this marriage song can be sung:—

"Ascend, beloved, to the joy,
The festal day has come;
To-day the Lamb doth feast His own,
To-day He with His bride sits down,
To-day puts on the spousal crown
In the great upper room."

Live with Them.

One more reason why we should love the Church more than we love anything else. Among all that we love and esteem on earth, pre-eminently above them all, should stand the Church of the Living God, because

we expect to live with the Church forever.

No one expects to live with husband or wife, parent or children, or earthly friends, long. More than one of us know the bitter import of those tender words of Andrew Fuller:

"There once did live a heart that cared for me,
I loved and was again beloved in turn.
Her tender soul would soothe my rising grief,
And wipe my tears and mix them with her own.
But she is not, and I am left to weep unheeded,
And to serve alone."

Let me urge all to make the most of each other's society, for it must be short. But with the Church we expect to live forever. If we are to live with the people of God forever, how

important that we love them! It would be hell enough to be united in marriage, even for a short life, with a person we did not love. But to live with Christians eternally, and yet not love them, would be an intolerable hell.

We should suffer more than a man did on a certain river. He had plenty of money, and was really having a drunken spree; not in the gutter, but having what he called a good time. Hearing the bell ring on a steamer, he stepped on board and was soon sailing on its proud waters. But hearing beautiful singing on the forepart of the vessel, he inquired of the captain what singing he had on board,

and was answered, "Sabbath-school singing, sir." "Sabbath-school," said he. "Is this not such a steamer?" "Not at all," was the reply. "Captain," he said, "you must set me on shore, if it costs me twenty dollars. I had as soon be in hell as to hear this Sabbath-school singing."

Suppose this man had been taken into heaven at once, and on the first minute after his arrival there, Abraham, and Moses, and the heavenly ones had commenced singing, "Glory to the Lamb! Glory to the Lamb! Our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb." The poor man would have inquired, "Are there none but Christians here? I never loved

Christians. I have never known the Lamb." There is no place where he would suffer more than he would among the redeemed, without love to them. It would be cruelty on the part of God to keep a man in heaven that did not love the Church above his chief joy. So important is this love to the people of God, that it is marked in the Bible as one of the clearest evidences of a change of heart. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." None could be happy in Heaven, however moral and correct in life, without this change in his affections. How important, then, that we possess the spirit of this text; that

we become sure we prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy, so that we can say, —

"Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways;
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise."

Let us inquire, in the light of this subject, how one will act if he loves the Church more than anything else?

Will Unite with Them.

If he prefers the Church above his chief joy, he will seek the first opportunity to unite with them. One of the first inquiries will be, "When will there be an opportunity for me to unite with this Church? I desire to

obey Christ in his ordinances." Christ says, John 14:23: "If a man love me he will keep my words." He will wish to obey Christ. The spirit of obedience will govern him. He may make mistakes, but will obey Christ in all things as far as he understands His will. It is a bad symptom when a man claims to be a Christian, and yet neglects the ordinances of the gospel. I am afraid of that hope that does not lead its possessor to a strict obedience to Christ's commands, as far as he understands them.

Do I address any one whose letter is in your trunk at home? Or did you come away without your letter of dismission; and yet have lived here·

three or six months? If you love Christ you will send for your letter at once. If you have lost your Church relation, will you not confess your way back, and live with the people of God? You will do this if you "prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy." Obedience to Christ's commands is one of the evidences of a renewed heart.

Share the Burdens.

We shall wish to share the burdens of the Church if we love it. One of the first inquiries will be, "Have we enough to make out our Pastor's salary? If not, double my subscription." So about the place of worship. And so about everything pertaining to

Christ's cause. He will not do as a rich church-member did where I was holding meetings. The Church sustained preaching among them by an average; that is, each one paid according to his means. This brother stood this for a few years, then concluded he could go to Heaven without so much expense, so asked and received his dismission from the Church. He said to me, "I get along first-rate now; it don't cost me half as much as when I was a church-member. I pay two dollars to the Baptists, and two dollars to the Congregationalists, and get along easy now." Think of such a poor, lean soul trying to get to Heaven on an emigrant-train. But

a true Christian will desire to share the burdens of the Church. It will be pleasant to call upon him for help, he gives so heartily and cheerfully. "He loveth a cheerful giver."

Other Organizations.

If he joins any other organization, and its meeting occurs at the same time of a regular prayer-meeting, he will say to its members, "I shall not be with you to-night, it is our regular prayer-meeting." "Prayer-meeting," they say, "what is that to our organization!" He replies, "I love our organization. I am one of you, and one with you, heart and hand, but I do not love it as I do the Church. If either

must be neglected, everything else before the Church. I shall always be with you when it does not interfere with the appointments of the Church. I love the Church more than anything else."

Speak Tenderly.

If he sees faults, or something he thinks is wrong in the Church, he will speak tenderly about it. It will grieve him. He will weep over it, but yet he will speak of it with great tenderness. Love to Christ's Church will cover a multitude of faults.

Everything will appear differently to us if our hearts are filled with warm love to the people and cause of God. I will give an illustration: In a cer-

tain town, after commencing a union meeting, I learned that there had been a division in the Baptist church, so serious that one of the deacons, and several of the prominent members, had left, determined not to walk with them any more. Just as I was closing the meeting one evening, with a large congregation present, one of these members asked me in great earnestness to request the congregation to wait, — that he desired to give the Baptist church a "blowing up." I asked him if he would not defer it, as it would be an injury to our meetings. He replied, "I will do it to please you, but they deserve it." A few nights after this, his uncon-

verted wife was kneeling for prayers. I hesitated to ask him to pray, knowing that a man could not pray as he ought, who felt and talked like that. I finally asked him to pray for her, thinking his religion might be covered, as our fathers used to cover a knot, or live coal, in ashes to keep fire, before matches were invented. The prayer had the effect to open a draft to the old fire of love in his heart. His wife was converted, his heart became warm with love to the Church. Before the meetings closed, he came to me and said, "I have been thinking about that matter of giving the Baptist church a 'blowing up,' and have concluded to come back

to the church if they will take me, and say nothing about their wrong doing." The whole thing appeared different to him as soon as he could say, "I prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Christians look, and feel, and speak differently when their hearts glow with love to Christ and His people. "Except a man has the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." This is the spirit of great tenderness.

His Last Will.

With this love in his heart, he will remember the Church in some of her wants in his last will and testament, although it is much better to

give all we can spare while living. But if we have something left, we shall not forget the Church in our wills.

Christ made His will in reference to His mother, a few hours before His death. Although the nails were in His hands and feet, seeing His mother before Him, and John standing near by, He asked John if he was willing to take care of His mother after His death, inquiring of her at the same time if it would be agreeable for her to make her home with John. The words of Christ are these, — John 19:26, 27: "Woman! behold thy son"; and to John, "Behold thy mother."

The meaning of these words was so well understood by John and Mary, both, that "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." Christ could not die until he had in His last will provided for His mother. Have any of you written your last will and testament? Have you, like Christ, remembered your mother (the Church), in that will? If not, will you alter that will to-morrow? Would it not be a painful thought (if pain could be in heaven), through the endless ages, that in disposing of our property we had forgotten the Church of Christ?

Let me say, in conclusion, to all, may I come in memory and stand by

your side when you make your last will and testament, and whisper this text in your ear,—"I prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy?"

Will you not, then, as you cause your will to be written, which disposes of your property, remember the Church in some of her wants, with such a legacy that it will be pleasant to review when you are walking the golden streets?—a legacy through which you will say in the best possible manner, "I prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy." Then it may, with propriety, be said of you,—"By it, he being dead yet speaketh."

AMEN.

THE IMPORTANT HOUR.

THE IMPORTANT HOUR.

"Father, the hour is come."—*John 17: 1.*

HOW evident it is, Christ knew his Father would understand Him! He does not say, "Father, I have got into trouble down here. I have met a formidable and unexpected difficulty in my mediatorial work,—something we had not arranged for." Nothing of the kind; but, "Father, the hour we talked about long before we made the first angel; that hour

when I was to bear the sins of my people in my own body on the tree; the hour around which was to gather all the great events in my mediatorial work, and all to depend upon its results; at last I have reached the important hour."

The word hour, in this passage, does not mean sixty minutes of time, but a crisis or point in Christ's mediatorial work, where all these events centered, and depended upon its results. This rendered it the most important hour in the world's history. I will speak of a few of these events, and show as clearly as I can how much importance can be crowded into a little point of time.

Great Struggle.

This was the long-anticipated hour of Christ's great struggle with the powers of darkness. It had been anticipated for ages. No doubt Satan had looked forward to that hour with the greatest interest for thousands of years, and made all his arrangements to meet and overcome Christ if possible, then. He knew, for it had been a matter of prophecy given to the world, that at that hour, in an important sense, the Father would forsake the Son, and the disciples flee away from Him, and that, too, when humanity was almost crushed beneath the load of our sins. It is written, "The shepherd shall be smit-

ten, and the sheep scattered." Satan, no doubt, said, "That will be my time to defeat the plan of salvation. If ever I conquer and overcome the Son of God, I must do it at that hour." Satan has often made great mistakes, and I am not sure but he had strong hopes of defeating the whole plan of redemption at that hour.

That I am right in this suggestion, go with me in thought to the Garden and mark the circumstances. As the fearful struggle drew near, Christ called for watchers. Leaving the most of the disciples in one part of the Garden, He took Peter, James, and John to another part, to act as watchers, telling them at the same

time that His soul was in such agony as takes life. O, what an hour! And what an experience for Jesus! He did not ask to be saved from Calvary; He came into the world to go to Calvary; but, sustained that He might reach Calvary alive, He must be Divinely sustained, or die in the Garden, and a dead Christ be nailed to the Cross.

We are told that an "angel appeared, strengthening Him." This was what He wanted, and what He prayed for and received. With this needed strength He was ready to go to the Cross and die. Going forth He met Judas, with his soldiers and clubs, and said to him, "Judas, you do not

need soldiers or clubs. This is your hour. I am at your disposal now." The scene was awfully grand; so much so, that the soldiers went backward and fell to the ground, but rallied again and led Him to the Cross, and nailed Him to it.

What an hour was this to Christ, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. With the nails in His hands and feet, His disciples fled away, and His Father's face hidden from Him. The bitterest ingredient in this cup of suffering was the hiding of His Father's face. This was the red cup of Divine wrath poured into the bosom of the Son. O, how terrible! "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Angels had never seen anything like this. They had seen legions of their brethren put in chains and hurled over the battlements of Heaven, the destruction of the old world, and Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed by fire, but had never seen such terrible wrath as this.

After calling for drink, and vinegar mingled with gall had been put to His lips, He cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. This ended the great struggle with the powers of darkness. The long-anticipated hour was now passed.

Open Door.

At that hour it was to be determined whether the door of hope,

opened to the world through the promise of Christ, should be kept open through the triumph of Christ. Suppose a failure on the part of Christ (we have a right to a supposition), and that Satan had kept Christ in the grave, as he evidently meant to do, beyond the appointed time? Suppose Sunday morning had come, and Christ was still in the grave? That he had not been a match for the formidable difficulties connected with this part of the work of redemption? What would have been the announcement made in the Christian pulpits in and about Jerusalem? Would not every pulpit been draped in deep mourning, and every minister have cried,

"All is lost! All is lost! The door of hope, opened to the world through the promise of Christ, is forever closed through the failure of Christ."

But, thanks be to God, all was safe in the hand of the Mediator. No such announcement was made. It was there He led the captive devil in chains, and spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

"The powers of darkness leagued in vain
To bind His soul in death;
He shook their kingdom when He fell,
With His expiring breath."

Connecting Link.

That hour also formed the grand connecting link between the old and

new dispensations. The priesthood under the Law ended at the Cross, and the Gospel dispensation commenced there. On the one side of the Cross stood the ministers of the Law, ready to offer a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, or a lamb, upon a Jewish altar, and on the other the twelve apostles, ready to go forth with their message of salvation;—the one to be dismissed, and the other to be commissioned. At that hour Christ did practically say to the priesthood under the Law, "You have finished your ministry; you have done it well, and you are dismissed from the priesthood; and you are dismissed forever. The Law has been a school-

master to lead the world to me, and here I am, the great Antitype to whom these types and shadows have been steadily pointing for ages. 'I am He that should come.' No more blood upon Jewish altars; no more slain beasts or birds for sacrifice."

Thus ended the old dispensation. Jesus then turning to the twelve apostles said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Cross was the link that joined the two dispensations together. The one could not be perfect without the other. A long line of saints had

"died in faith, not having received the promises, but had seen them afar off and embraced them, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The Old Testament requires the New, and the New the Old. Neither is perfect without the other. If we were to give an intelligent heathen the Old or New Testament, he would soon ask for the other part of the book. The Cross was the golden link that united them. So that we can sing with full hearts, around the Cross, —

"Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won
Lo! our Sun's eclipse is o'er,
Lo! He sets in blood no more."

Future Happiness.

One more event depended on the result of that hour. This I will speak of with great reverence and humility, but I so understand the plan of redemption. The future happiness of the millions who were that day in heaven depended upon Christ's meeting the demands of the Law for them then. No atonement had been made for Abraham, and Moses, and the long line of saints then in heaven. Christ had not died a number of times, but once for all. They had been received into heaven on the strength of an atonement Christ promised to make, but had not yet made it. Christ had entered into a covenant with the

Father, that when the Law demanded satisfaction He would render it; that He would suffer,—the just for the unjust. That hour had now come; Christ must now, if ever, become the end of the Law for righteousness; not only for every one who should believe on Him, but for all who had believed on Him.

No doubt this great truth was well understood by the redeemed in heaven,—that Christ was that day to die for them, and that their future happiness depended on Christ's meeting every claim the perfect Law of God had ever held against them, and doing it that day. O, what an exceptional day that was in heaven! No such day

was ever experienced there. Two of their number,—Moses, the great law-giver, and Elijah, the Old Testament's greatest prophet,—were sent to inquire of Jesus (so I think), if He was going to be able to carry it through. We get some idea of the object of their mission, by a few words overheard by the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. They heard Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus of the decease (that is, the death) that he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The object of their visit, then, was something in reference to His death that deeply interested all the heavenly ones.

What an intense interest must have been felt to hear the report of these

two men on their return! No day or hour like this was ever known in heaven. They could look on and witness the agony of Christ, but what could they do? Christ must tread the wine-press of His Father's wrath alone. I think no song was heard, nor harp-string touched in heaven, from Friday noon until Sunday morning. We are told that there was silence in heaven for a little space. Could anything be more suitable than for all heaven to suspend their songs and hold in silence their golden harps, when Christ went to the Cross for *them?* They knew, about noon, that the nails had entered Christ's hands and feet, and no doubt heard His groans as He cried

out: "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" They then understood more fully than ever before what atonement meant, and what a dreadful thing sin is.

Sometime in the afternoon, Christ, after saying "I thirst," and vinegar, mingled with gall had been held to His lips, cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. What tidings were to reach heaven that evening?—"Jesus is dead! Jesus is dead!" Some of us remember the sadness and gloom that rested on us when, just before midnight, the bells rang out over this and other lands, "James A. Garfield is dead!" The whole country seemed draped in deep mourning. But how

must it have sounded in heaven to hear angels and archangels, with millions of saints around the throne, saying, "Jesus is dead! Jesus is dead!"

The body was placed in a sepulchre Friday evening, as we reckon the days of the week. All night Friday night, and all day and night Saturday, Jesus was in the sweet repose of the grave. What a topic of conversation all this time in heaven was the resurrection of that body! That was to be the crowning act of redemption. Early Sunday morning the Father sent one of the angels to roll the stone from the sepulchre. Not to assist in raising Christ from the dead; that must be His own act.

What thoughts must have filled the mind of that angel, as he folded his wings and sat down on that stone, in utter helplessness, so far as raising that body was concerned! Think of millions of the bright ones looking upon that dead form, lying in that open sepulchre, knowing, as they did, that they must come out of heaven unless that body rose from the dead that very morning. Yet they could do nothing towards it. Could an hour be crowded with more importance to the heavenly ones? How many times during those three days must the question have been asked, "Will He rise? Will He rise? Will He break the bars of death? Will He rob the

grave of its victory, so that our bodies that are sleeping in their dusty beds will rise in the morning of that great day, when the trumpet shall sound?"

But, thanks be to God and the Lamb, forever. While the harps of gold were silent, and the angel sat on the stone at the sepulchre, and millions of smiling eyes were bending over the battlements of glory, all waiting the results of that hour, Christ walked out of the sepulchre in the presence of heaven and earth, as if He had risen from a sweet night's repose. There He stood, the Conqueror of earth and hell, holding the keys of life and death. Oh, the lean-

ness of language to describe the scene that followed in heaven around the throne of God that morning. Never did angels or men know such an hour. This was the hour of victory for Himself and His people. "He lives! He lives!" was no doubt heard all over the heavenly city. "Heaven is ours forever. Take your golden harps, and sing your sweetest songs. 'Glory to the Lamb! Glory to the Lamb!' Our sins are washed away, not only by the blood, but by the resurrection of the Lamb."

"He broke the bars of death,
Which none e'er broke before;
And rose in conquering majesty,
To stoop to death no more."

Here the angels met Him to accompany Him to His Father's right hand in heaven. Yet He remained for forty days before He was "received up into glory," to remove all doubt about His resurrection, and arrange the affairs of His kingdom on earth. How long these forty days must have seemed to the heavenly ones before they could see and welcome Him back, after such a mission and such a victory! But the hour came at last for Him to go up to His throne above. This was to be another unusual day in heaven,—a day of great joy among all the heavenly hosts.

"They brought His chariot from the skies,
To bear Him to His throne;

Clapped their glad wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

Is it possible for language to describe His entrance through the gates of pearl? Is it too much to believe that all heaven went out to meet Him, and came in with Him, crying out as they enter: "Lift your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." "Who is this King of Glory?" "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

Great and brave men have had receptions on earth, but what a reception Christ must have had when He returned victorious from earth, to be crowned "King of Glory!" With

what rapture and delight they sang, as the crown was placed upon His head,

"Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crowns become the victors' brow."

Well might the Saviour say, when He uttered this text: "Father, the hour is come"; not an hour of great importance is come, but the hour that swallows up all other hours since time began in its far-reaching results,—reaching back through the long list of ages, and meeting every demand the perfect law of God had ever held against those who had believed in a promised Saviour, and put their trust in him, and forward in its saving power to all who should believe on Christ through their word

Thus Christ "died once for all." O, the importance that connected itself with that point in the mediatorial work of our Redeemer!

In the light of this single thought, let me show, as clearly as possible, that what was true of Christ at that crisis in His work, has been true of nations and individuals in all ages of the world.

A Crisis.

A crisis is reached, and at that point, victory or defeat, life or death, follows. Our first parents reached such a point. No doubt they had often passed that forbidden tree, with no thought or wish to touch it. But at last the crisis came, and life or

death must follow the decision of an hour. It is evident that our mother, Eve, while looking the forbidden tree carefully over, felt, at first, a gentle desire come over her to taste of the forbidden fruit, yet had no idea of doing it. But the desire increased upon her until she reached such a crisis, that upon the one action of that woman's will hung the destiny of this world. O, if she had hurried away, saying, "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" She was as yet unstained by sin, and in a state to walk and talk with God as we walk and talk with each other. The question in her mind seemed to be, "Shall I taste of it and run the risk of dying, or

refuse and be safe?" She was able to stand, yet free to fall. O, what an hour in the history of this world! But the evil prevailed. She said, "I will taste of it." The deed was done. She fell, and in that fall all our blood was poisoned, and this world became a great grave-yard. Not one of her unborn children could be saved without the death of the Son of God upon the Cross. How much importance attached itself to that single act!

The Signers.

So it was with the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In that old hall stood a table with that memorable document on it; a sober look-

looking class of men about it, with the question before them, "Shall we sign it, and if need be, seal it with our blood?" The decision was made. They signed it, and thus this nation was born. The decisive hour came, and God had raised up men for that hour. And so, for more than a century, when in our history we have reached a crisis, there have been men for the crisis. We still live. "The government is still safe."

With Individuals.

It is the same with individual responsibility. We reach a point in our lives

> "That marks the destiny of man
> For glory or despair."

We hear the calls and warnings of

the Gospel, and reject them, and yet we may be saved. This may be repeated many times, and it not be too late. But an hour is reached at last when we cannot say "No," once more, and be saved. The decision then is final. The destiny of the soul is then fixed forever.

"There is a line by us unseen
That crosses every path,
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.

That fearful line may be near your feet, or may have been already crossed. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." How dangerous to resist His strivings! Christ said to Jerusalem, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at

least, in this, thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes." Too late! Too late! How dreadful the thought, that we may find out that we are lost when it is too late to be saved.

A young lady deeply convicted of her sins, was urged to accept Christ at once, but she hesitated, and finally decided to attend one more ball before becoming a Christian. She went to the ball, but the Spirit left her. Not long after, she went into a decline, and died without hope. "I called; ye refused." The stretched-out, bleeding hand refused!

Am I not addressing those who have said "No, no," to the calls of the

Gospel from your earliest moment? Has not Christ been rejected every day of your lives? Do you know certainly this is not the hour of final decision? The unseen line may be crossed this hour. O, the importance of the decision you make now! Does not the Holy Spirit whisper, "The hour is come"? Do not say, then, "Go thy way for this time," lest it should prove to be the last time you can say "No," and be saved.

When the crisis came Christ met it and triumphed over it. Will yot not do the same? "I have set life and death before you, therefore choose life." Will you not now silently but solemnly say, putting your veracity and

honor in the decision, "Jesus, I accept Thee as my Saviour, and will serve Thee from this hour; whether my path is light or dark, rough or smooth, still I will obey and serve Thee the remainder of my days"?

May Jesus give you strength and grace to trust Him and carry out this vow, and I be permitted to meet you in heaven and hear you say, "That was the hour of decision and victory."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

AMEN.

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